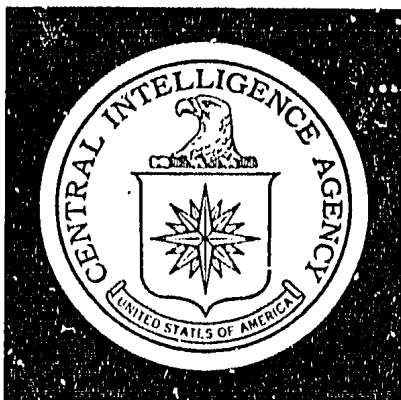


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Secret



BOARD OF
NATIONAL ESTIMATES

SPECIAL MEMORANDUM

What Next for Rhodesia ?

Secret

15 November 1968
No. 21-68

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C E N T R A L I N T E L L I G E N C E A G E N C Y

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

15 November 1968

SPECIAL MEMORANDUM NO. 21-68

SUBJECT: What Next for Rhodesia?*

SUMMARY

We think the chances are better than even that Rhodesia and the UK will reach a settlement by which Ian Smith's white minority "rebel" regime is legitimized. Black Africans, sensing such an outcome, have already served notice that they will try to block any effort in the UN to remove the economic sanctions against Rhodesia, and are likely to instigate more fireworks in the UN and elsewhere. Some may stage angry demonstrations against the UK, break relations, or drop out of the Commonwealth. Other nations, including the US, which have implemented the UN sanctions decree would then face difficult decisions on how to treat a "legitimate" Rhodesia.

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I. Background

1. Three years ago this month Ian Smith defied Britain and the world by proclaiming the independence of Rhodesia under white minority rule. The resulting dispute between Rhodesia and the UK has centered around the terms of Rhodesia's constitution, most of which date from 1961, when a complex parliamentary electoral system was devised to ensure white control. It has been a strange rebellion in many ways. Harold Wilson almost immediately ruled out a military response, thereby losing the sympathy and arousing the suspicions of many black Africans. Wilson's subsequent avowal of NIBMAR (no independence before majority African rule) partly assuaged African members of the Commonwealth, but widened the gulf between him and Smith. In the course of sporadic discussions with the Rhodesians, Wilson edged away from NIBMAR, but took a stance almost as unacceptable to the Smith regime.

2. The conflict was broadened and became more intractable when Wilson in 1966 got the approval of the UN Security Council for international punitive measures against the rebellious colony. The Security Council, applying for the first time Chapter VII of its charter, declared Smith's government a threat to world

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peace and imposed specific mandatory economic sanctions. Again in the spring of 1968 the Security Council invoked Chapter VII in setting more stringent mandatory sanctions. The US, UK, and others have implemented the successive UN resolutions by their own declarations. Despite increasing pressure from sanctions and ostracism from the world community, white Rhodesia with the connivance of Portugal and South Africa has survived by import substitution and clandestine trade. Until the last few weeks, the prospects for any settlement, or even any meaningful negotiations appeared exceedingly bleak.

II. Recent Developments

3. Most of the recent moves in the direction of a settlement have been initiated by Wilson. He arranged the constitutional talks with Smith aboard HMS Fearless in Gibraltar Harbor in early October, and offered a more generous package than any presented previously. Wilson has long since dropped NIBMAR, if indeed he ever really believed he could bring it off. Nor is he now talking as he did in 1966 of imposing an interim British rule in Salisbury while arranging the terms of a multi-racial constitution. Rather the current exchanges are keyed to

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ways of bestowing legitimacy on the Smith government without actually violating the terms of the Six Principles which were announced as minimum British demands before Rhodesian independence.*

4. We do not comprehend why Wilson at this time is pushing towards a settlement with the Rhodesians. Indeed, his interests would seem better served by a policy of inaction. There are no strong pressures in Britain for an accord with Smith, and Wilson is well aware that any settlement which Smith could accept would be denounced as a sell out by many at home and abroad. Wilson may, however, have been swayed by recent internal developments in Rhodesia. During the summer white Rhodesians were discussing the terms of a republican constitution which would have edged them closer to apartheid, and reduced the chances for any negotiated settlement. Smith has strengthened his political position by successfully getting rid of some cabinet

* The Six Principles are: a guarantee of unimpeded progress towards majority rule; guarantees against retrogressive amendments of the constitution; immediate improvement in the political status of the Africans; progress towards ending racial discrimination; the acceptance of the constitution by the people of Rhodesia as a whole; and no oppression of the majority by the minority or vice versa.

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members who were hard liners on the racial issue and has thereby increased his ability to make a compromise settlement which would gain a recognition of legitimacy for his regime from the UK. Wilson may believe therefore that this is the best, or perhaps the last, opportunity to make a deal with Rhodesia on terms that could be presented as a general vindication of the Six Principles and defended as a better alternative than a drift towards apartheid. Such a deal would also relieve to some extent an issue which seems to advertize the impotence of the UK. Furthermore, Wilson would doubtless like to be rid of the Rhodesian matter well before the next general election.

5. Ian Smith, though moving in his usual unhurried manner, is clearly eager to win an early agreement with the UK. He has tested Wilson's firmness on one of his key demands, i.e., that Rhodesians have the right to appeal to the British Privy Council as the final court on constitutional matters, and found, probably to his surprise, that Wilson was flexible. This has encouraged him to balk at other sticky points in the proposals which Wilson presented at Gibraltar. But, so long as both sides are amenable to continuing the negotiations, the talks are likely to go on for some time.

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6. Smith has virtually a free hand to deal with the metropole in the name of white Rhodesia. In the years since seizing independence his political power and popularity have increased considerably. He has withstood challenges from the right wing of his party, and purged from his cabinet the extremists who might have balked at any compromise. To those in the political center, Smith symbolizes what they regard as a successful defiance of a hostile world. The hardships imposed by economic sanctions and a severe drought and the dangers raised by periodic forays of black insurgents from Zambia have both stiffened the resolve of the whites to cling to power and enhanced their support for Smith.

7. There are limits to the concessions which the whites would accept as a price for legitimacy, but these are limits which Smith would probably not exceed in any case. Few white Rhodesians at this stage would tolerate a constitution which offered the blacks more than token participation in the political process now and over the short run. The left, in the peculiar spectrum of white Rhodesian politics, would accept a gradual rise in black participation, based on "merit" rather than numbers, if assured of white domination for a very long time. Rhodesian

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rightists generally advocate some form of separate development along South African lines, and would probably reject any compromise agreement which Smith might work out with Wilson. Indeed, it is unlikely that Smith is counting on their support or their neutrality. He probably is aiming towards a constitution which will be acceptable, or at least tolerable, to the left and center, and is willing to face the anger of the diehards.

III. A Settlement: Its Likely Nature and Repercussions

8. We think the chances are better than even that negotiations will lead eventually to a settlement in which the UK bestows legitimacy on a white-dominated Rhodesian government. The bargaining is likely to be hard and the process may drag on for several months. Neither the left wing of the British Labour Party nor the rightists in Rhodesia would find the outcome pleasing, but neither group is likely to be able to do much more than complain. We think that both Wilson and Smith are sufficiently adroit to find means of mollifying their domestic foes, without endangering their own positions or the agreement. Furthermore, the controversial clauses in the new constitution would probably be so ambiguous or so deliberately fuzzed as to allow both sides to claim a victory.

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9. In this case a settlement with the UK would by no means resolve the Rhodesian affair. Indeed, the legitimizing of white minority rule in Rhodesia would be likely to inflame further the racial antagonisms between southern and black Africa, and bring on more fireworks in the UN. African members of the UN, already sensing the possibility of a deal between Wilson and Smith, have served notice that they will try to forestall any move to withdraw the sanctions resolutions earlier adopted under Chapter VII. If the Security Council actions were not rescinded, Rhodesia could remain an international outcast for some time. Those nations, including the US, which have acted in accord with the Chapter VII resolutions to ban trade and other relations with Rhodesia, would then face difficult decisions on how to treat a "legitimate" Rhodesia. Some European countries would probably tacitly allow a resumption of trade, but it is doubtful that many would accord early diplomatic recognition.

A. Reactions in Black Africa

10. In black Africa, most governments would regard any likely Smith-Wilson arrangement as a sell out, no matter how cleverly presented. Feelings against the UK would run high, particularly in Zambia and Tanzania. These two might drop out of the Commonwealth or possibly break relations with the UK,

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and would look for other ways to retaliate against Wilson. If demonstrations were to get out of hand, there might be some harassment of UK nationals, some damage to British property and perhaps even some danger to lives, but we do not foresee any widespread attack on whites. Nonetheless, some other Europeans or Americans might be affected, either by accident or because anti-British feelings could in the heat of the moment take an anti-white turn.

11. Elsewhere in black Africa reactions, though generally vociferous, would probably be less severe. Some of the radical states, e.g., Guinea and Mali, might sever relations with the UK, and would certainly raise a commotion in the UN and the OAU, and call upon the world powers to use force against white Rhodesia. Even some of the more moderate states, e.g., Kenya or Uganda, are likely to manifest their displeasure by noisy demonstrations, and angry denunciations, and might even leave the Commonwealth. Many others, perhaps the majority, are too preoccupied by domestic concerns or too distant from Rhodesia to take serious heed of the matter. They would join in African expressions of indignation, but would soon forget about it. Needless to say we do not foresee any early trend toward African acceptance or recognition of white Rhodesia.

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B. The Attitude of South Africa

12. For years Pretoria has looked on the Rhodesian affair as an embarrassment, in part because it has attracted world attention to racial problems in southern Africa, and especially because it has resulted in the application of economic sanctions against Smith, and thereby placed South Africa in the awkward position of either risking a demonstration of how sanctions can bring down a government or of defying the UN and world opinion by aiding Rhodesia. Having opted for the latter policy, Pretoria now feels exposed to possible UN-instigated punitive measures. Indeed the General Assembly in early November passed by an overwhelming margin a resolution calling for the extension of economic sanctions to include South Africa. Even though such actions by the UN are not binding, and South Africans for years have ignored other exhortations and condemnations from the world body, they don't like the situation and would welcome anything which reduced their conspicuous posture as the principal support of white Rhodesia. South African Prime Minister Vorster is, therefore, encouraging Smith and Wilson to come to terms, and would endorse almost any likely accord.

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13. The legitimizing of Rhodesia would diminish its economic dependence upon South Africa, but would probably not affect the security cooperation now in effect. Rhodesian security forces could probably handle the occasional forays of black Rhodesian and South African insurgents from the north without South African help. Nevertheless, white South Africans are hypersensitive about black insurgents anywhere in southern Africa, and feel much more secure with the Zambezi River as the front line rather than the Limpopo. South Africa, which now has some 200 police deployed in Rhodesia, is therefore likely to remain involved in Rhodesian security affairs for a long time regardless of whether a settlement is reached or not.

C. The Prospect in Rhodesia Itself

14. Most white Rhodesians would follow Smith, if he accepted an accord along the lines of the Gibraltar terms. The resumption of normal economic relations with the UK and other former trading partners would give a considerable lift to the now stagnant economy. New investment from foreign private sources in mining and industry would help to boost urban African employment. Also Rhodesian businessmen would hail their liberation from the onerous dependence upon profit-seeking, crotchety South African intermediaries.

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15. Even if the terms of settlement were to call for unimpeded African political progress, it is unlikely that the whites would in practice permit much advancement. Some black Rhodesians with political aspirations would be further embittered, and the general resentment of white privileges would grow. This would be only slightly tempered by the improved economic position of urban blacks, who are likely to share to some extent in the development of the country. Also, black Rhodesians are well aware of the coercive and intelligence capabilities of the white-led security forces. We doubt therefore that Rhodesian blacks would resort to organized violence. The militant black nationalist organizations are too divided, and lacking in effective leadership, to pose a serious security threat to white Rhodesians for some time. There will, however, be further raids from Zambia by black Rhodesians, though of limited scope and with little chance of success.

16. In the event that no settlement is reached, many white Rhodesians will be disappointed, and most will blame Wilson rather than Smith. The economy will continue at about present levels, aided by South African commercial and financial resources, and few whites will suffer severely. We think that white

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Rhodesians will be no more likely to accept Wilson's minimum terms in a year or two than they are now. Rather they will look forward to a change of government in Britain, and, mistakenly or not, will continue to believe that the Tories will offer softer terms. Meanwhile, Smith might reopen internal political discussions leading toward a republican constitution, even though this could complicate further talks with the British.

17. In the long run, whether or not Smith gains legitimacy for his regime is to a large extent irrelevant. Whites in either case are likely to govern Rhodesia for some years in relatively peaceful conditions. Sporadic exile incursions from Zambia will be irritating but not unbearable. The larger problem in Rhodesia is the rapidly growing numerical disparity of the races. As always, African statistics are dubious, but the best figures available indicate that Africans in Rhodesia number over four million against 230,000 whites. The estimated annual rate of increase of the Africans is better than three percent, among the highest in the world. At the current rate, the African population will double in

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about two decades. Pressures on the land in tribal reserves are already heavy, and few jobs are available in urban areas and on white farms. It will take considerable skill by Smith and his successors to manage the new internal problems arising from African population growth. It is difficult to estimate how long, in these circumstances, the whites could keep peace in Rhodesia.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES, 25X1A

Acting Chairman